

# UNL Extension: Acreage Insights

## Acreage eNews-June 2013

<http://acreage.unl.edu>

### Take a Stroll in the Pasture

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A long walk on a nice summer evening is hard to beat. Here's an idea, take a stroll through your pasture and evaluate the pasture resources on your acreage or small farm. After last year's drought and its impact on our pastures, a pasture walk is even more important. Invite other family members or friends to join you.

Dr. Stephen Barnhart, Iowa State University Extension forage agronomist, suggests that to get the best view of plant recovery and vigor wait until there are 2 to 3 inches of spring regrowth. Then walk through your pastures and consider:

1. Have there been any changes in plant species since the last season?
2. Is the pasture density less than last season?
3. Is there evidence that weeds will be more of a problem?
4. Is there active erosion or localized damage due to supplemental hay feeding?

Pastures with little or no drought damage should have overwintered well and have a stand density of 80 percent sod cover or greater. These pastures should recover with good growing conditions. Even with apparent "normal growth", plants have had some drought and use stress, and they may require a deferred grazing for a couple of weeks longer than usual for complete recovery.

Pastures with greater drought damage may have some stand loss, with less than 80 percent sod cover. These pastures will benefit from deferred spring grazing. Interseeding with legumes may also be an option to thicken up the stand. Even with deferred fertilization, overseeding and weed management, these pastures may require good growing conditions and two to three months of careful grazing management for complete recovery.



*Damaged pasture area with invading weeds.*

Severely damaged stands (stands with less than 40 percent sod cover) are going to require good growing conditions, weed management, an aggressive overseeding effort (or even complete renovation) and patience for adequate recovery opportunities.

Pasture walks can be a valuable assessment tool. Routinely walking your pastures can provide useful information for short-term management decisions about grazing pressure, fertility needs, weed control, forage availability and overall pasture management. For help with getting started with a pasture walk or help with pasture management questions, contact your local University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Office or your local Natural Resources Conservation Service Office.

Summer is a good time to evaluate your pasture and your management practices. So take a nice evening walk in your pasture.